

PLINKY PLONKY

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Issue 10
Present
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PLINKY

*This magazine is created and published on the
Indigenous land of The Eora Nation, of which
sovereignty was never ceded.*

*We ask to pay respect to all Indigenous Peoples both
past, present and future. This land was and always
will be Aboriginal Land.*

Hi there!

For the first time, Plinky Plonky is hopefully in print.

If it is, you're holding it, which, I hope it feels nice.

The theme for this issue is "Present", and it felt apt to get Plinky Plonky into the physical world with such a theme. Enjoy, see you soon for Issue 11 – Future, and enjoy this edition.

Time Capsule III. Burning Lull

I wrote in June, the previous time capsule of finding creative juices in the wake of successful projects. Yet, I find myself in a slight lull. I am content with this boredom. In slowing down, I've been able to reflect. In the creative processes, my art, skills and focus.

Coordinating Plinky Plonky as well as designing, writing, web design, other projects and life commitments— well, leads to that semi-burnout. It's a lot of work, but it's all in the pursuit of passion. All I can say is I'm excited for the future, I'm excited to make Plinky Plonky a little more artsy wacky wacky! ✨

Let's time travel together, 25/08/24 | 12:46PM

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A Decade Passes A We Do

Verity Woods

Ten years were spent apart
Water froze, chilling in its solace
But I learn to skate across it.

As this summer approaches, ice melts
Animals drink from the pool as they did before
The Agora had re-populated.

I float across it on my back of new skin
In roost, I glance upon you in neighbouring channels
You drift toward, then beside me, unwavering.

It is a chance meeting of once-bound in an apparently small pond
Travelled hearts leap to and from lily pads as we reacquaint and reminisce,
Exhalations between each word perfuming the air with rose-tinted vigour,
Your smile invites the familiar tug of enchanting optimism,
Compelling me towards fleeting arms,
A tear shed, we tread regrets and what-ifs as the tide brings us to sunrise
If only I could love you now.

~~Prelude~~**Comets**

Life travels the cosmos in spiraled slingshots
Beacons litter the oort cloud

Celestial bodies spin equidistant
Gravitating aimless, phantoms of open space

Nestling between stars I sail an aimless voyage
Empty oceans littered with quasars

Galaxies facilitate ritualistic Salsa Rueda
I am constantly out of time

A rouge comet births collision
Your gamma is both joyous and serious

Our meeting is course-correcting
Orbits twin and dance with passions unfelt

We hoist flags to conquered territory.
Singing in synchronicity, we smile at each other's smile ★

An Alien Sends Home A Status Report From The West

Antoinette Luu

After 'A Martian Sends a Postcard Home' by Craig Raine

Humans go cloud watching to practise the art
of seeing that which is vapour as solid; they remark
that one's a bunny, no, an elephant, a shark.

Once a year, gifts are sought in the hope of
(but are really bought in the name of)
a saint stuck in a chimney.

The humans write their wishes into the smoke of
their flaming cake, their wishes wilful enough to emboss into
air. A pen is a tool that mobilises thought

like when they crack the v-shaped bone
from the sternum of a turkey
into two pens to mobilise one wish.

They also wish upon the trail of pressurised rock
that we call our home planet—
does that make us their god?

Their youth toss the copper face of their monarch
into a fountain of fish. She spirals down like a question mark.
A homeless man collects their wishes when it's dark.

My fellow alien,
 those who pray to a wisp of smoke or a santa
 a sternum or a star
 or a five cent Elizabeth tossed amongst the koi—

 those humans cannot fathom the others of their kind who
 hold their hands to the same H₂O sky
 and utter Buddha, Vishnu, Allah

 those who immolate the wax on their cake
 cannot sympathise with others outside the embassy
 call it pointless when they incense themselves
 like candlesticks

 because the fires won't cease elsewhere
 because elsewhere-youth wish upon food deliveries, immobil-
 ised, as they go plume-watching and remark
that one's a plane, no, a bomb, where is Ma?

 my fellow alien,
 if they cannot understand each other
 then they are not ready for us either. ✨

Get your elbows off my table

Layla Zak-Volpato

Preface:

The great merit and shortfall of writing personal, non-fiction prose is that it is inseparable from its context.

Pieces I wrote when I was fifteen will always reek of teenage misery and I'm sure that pieces I write when I'm eighty will be full of unmistakable wisdom. This piece is a time capsule from the middle two weeks of April 2024 – following events at Bondi Junction that left femme-presenting people in Sydney petrified and enraged. Much has happened since that has changed how we see this period (and in another ten years, that lens of reflection will be even further distorted). Even after a few months, these events seem distant - let this piece refresh your memory.

Trigger Warning:
Sexual assault, rape and
gender violence.

Today I'm not sure whether I should be more afraid of being raped or stabbed to death while shopping for new underwear. Fear of men is nothing new, but I don't feel that kind of rancid terror that makes you feel like a hunted animal. I inherited fear of men from my mother and my aunts (It's practically a family heirloom). My fear of being raped or abducted on my way home from a night out is akin to the paranoia that I left the oven on. It's a familiar sound bite of head noise that doesn't spike my adrenaline anymore and, just like accidentally leaving the oven, it's happened to women I know.

I recently argued with a man that I was seeing about this. The conversation started on the train home from the pub. I mentioned with nonchalance that, in conversation around the pool table, an old man had rested his hand on my thigh. Picture him with thinning dark hair,

tall and wiry - talking loudly, waving around the pool cue, and ducking out every 10 minutes for a smoke. Whatever this man had been saying at the time was inconsequential, I don't even remember if he was talking to me, all I remember is that he placed his hand on my thigh just long enough for me to feel its warmth and then it was gone. Most women know that men will touch your body with as much casual ease as they adjust a coaster on a table or chalk the end of a pool cue. So, I told the boy on the train with me about what had happened, framed in a tone of "Ugh, how annoying that this happened to me tonight".

He took this information very hard.

He spluttered and stammered, and I could see rage mixing with alcohol and indignation and frustration as he waved his hands around and took big sighs. What surprised me about his reaction was that even though he was angry about what had happened, he seemed to be even angrier and more confused about why I'd told him so casually and why he hadn't found out sooner.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I didn't need to, it wasn't a big deal"

"It disturbs me that you don't think it's a big deal"

Unfortunately, it's not a big deal. The first time I was touched inappropriately without my consent by a man happened at such a young age and has happened so many times since that I can't even pinpoint it in time. Men interact with my body as casually as they do a table at The Botany View. So, naturally, I'm a few degrees past jaded.

I found myself sitting on this train saying to this man -

"If I said something and brought someone to my defence every time a man has made me feel uncomfortable in public,

I wouldn't have a life"

My scale for what I will tolerate men to do to my body is broad and has gotten broader with time. At fifteen I was bothered by a boy who would take any opportunity to hold my waist as he squeezed past me in the crowded kitchen of a house party (If someone did that now, I might not even notice). If, on a crowded dance floor, I were to feel a hungry pair of anonymous hands or hot breath on my back or my neck, I might roll my eyes and move away. These are things on the low end of

the spectrum that I don't bother bringing up - because they're inevitable - familiar and fairly harmless.

Things in the middle of the spectrum involve direct harm, these are things I have told people about, and these are things I will not describe here.

Rape and abduction are at the top end of the spectrum (the irony is that if I experience these things, I might not even be around to tell). Recently, as of this weekend, I've added being stabbed to this category.

I'm not sure how I should feel after what happened in Bondi junction over the weekend. Do I need to adjust my scale?

If a man looks at me in public with hungry eyes, do I now need to worry that he's going to stab me?

In the last few days, five women and one man were killed in a shopping centre (the majority of those injured were also women).

Bruce Lehrmann has finally been accused of raping Brittany Higgins.

There's nothing but numb rage, fear comes into the equation but only briefly.

Today, a man walking along Manly Beach looked at me like he wanted to eat me.

He wet his lips with his tongue

I swear it was forked.

I know he wanted to take a bite

but maybe he'll use a knife with sophistication and carve me into prime cuts,

he hopes that in the process he won't pierce my guts -

their human smell might turn him off the sweetness of my rump so much of flavour comes from smell.

I better stop wearing deodorant,

otherwise, he may end up with **his elbows on the table.** ★



juppie

Hum

Layla Zak-Volpato

Press your lips together
and hum
try (aside)
the harmony of a song
you've loved
since you were 16.
The way your lips tickle
in that soft,
lush,
moist part of your mouth
is how it felt to love him.

She sees him too -
"I want a man who wants to drink hot chocolate out of the bowl
made by the web of skin between my thumb and pointer finger."
Her hair grew long enough to be wrapped around a fist and pulled.

Women in my family are tower builders
dripping dishes stacked with teaspoon beams
creaking porcelain temples
we create:
scaffold around our kin,
hot water with a squeeze of lemon, handfuls of blueberries, pinched cheeks,
manuka honey,

ant poison on the windowsill.
Remedies, hexes –

None work for heartbreak.

I bared my chest to him and pointed to the fleshy space between my ribs
where the blood and

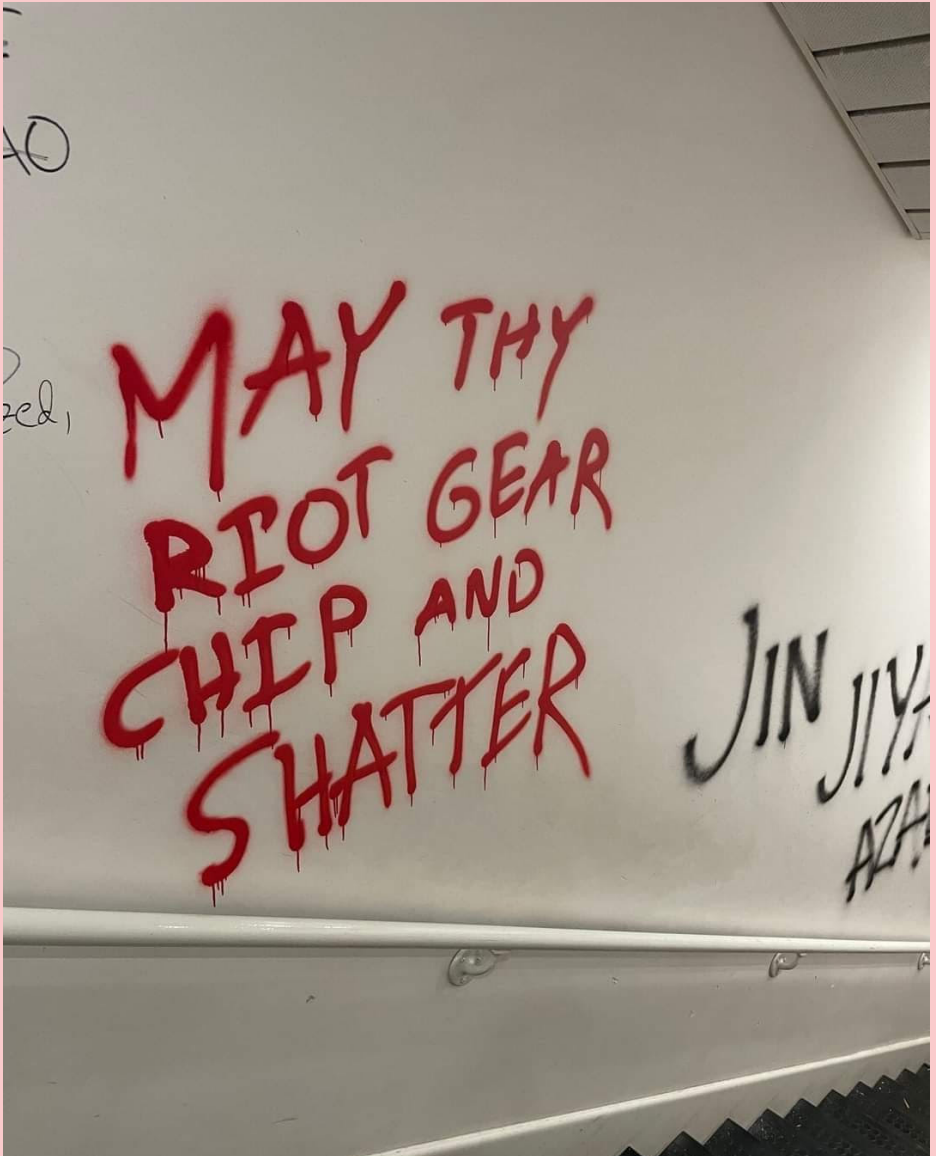
bone pinch so you could see how my muscles had grown
("Look! See!")
how the bones had elongated, tripled, quadrupled since I was young.
My hair is shorter now than he'd ever seen it and the flesh and blood
around my lungs is still

bloody and red and even without his gaze
my heart beats.

I've lost my romantic eyes.
Put them in the pocket of my jeans that bag in the crotch and sent them
through a cycle,

washed down the drain with the suds and five-cent coins.

My eyes leak,
Against all will,
All reason. ★



Photograph taken in Portland
State University Library

Trigger Warning:
Israeli–Palestinian conflict

“Pray for Imperial Predators”

Absurdeus

“Pray for Imperial Predators”

May thy riot gear
chip and shatter

Bless thy bullets
to backfire blunders

May thy billyclub
break and clatter

Bless the weapons
to harm the hunters

May the blood
of jackboots splatter

Hath thy rifles
recoil mouthward

May thou flee
toothless, battered

Hark the chants
defy thy warlord

May thy Empire
be dust and tatters

Bless thy barracks
to burn and crumble

May thy backbone
falter, chatter

Hark! The Intifada
roars and rumbles

Slacker

(2024)

Angelique Ford

"In a few hours, I'm going to lose all identity. Eight hours ago, I was Max Belmont, English major, college senior. Now I'm Max Belmont who does nothing. All my accomplishments are in the past."

- Kicking and Screaming (1995)

"Young people especially are these modern knights who must force their way through the course of the world which realises itself instead of their ideals, and they regard it as a misfortune that there is any family, civil society, state, laws, professional business, etc., because these substantive relations of life with their barriers cruelly oppose the ideals and the infinite rights of the heart."

- Hegel, Romantic Fiction

The stuff I've been reading, watching and listening to lately keeps mentioning the endless time of youth. When you're young, the possibilities are inexhaustible and the choices endless, and that you have so much time for it all. These sentiments all come from people looking backwards at their youth; did they feel like this when they were actually in the dirge of their early 20s?

My Instagram algorithm is feeding me reels of women in their late 20s and early 30s who have had the expected markers of being a certain age fall away. Their general message is not to worry in your 20s because you can't plan out what will happen, but that things will work out. While they intend to comfort, it makes me feel... worse?

Needless to say, I still feel the scramble of trying to figure things out.

In my mid-teens, I came across the films *Reality Bites* and *Funny Ha Ha*. At the time, I loved coming-of-age movies but had never seen films with this kind of plot: of women in their young 20s living unsurely, both personally and professionally. I was too young to relate to their circumstances but I felt an affinity with them, maybe I saw my future self in them somehow.

Now, at 23, I'm their age.

These movies and others like them (*Girlfriends*, *Frances Ha*, *Actual People*, *Tiny Furniture*, *Variety*, etc.) don't provide an aspirational model of success; instead, the existence of their flailing characters creates a precedent of averageness, an "it's-okay-that-it's-like-this". Now, in my own period of stagnancy with undefined hopes and unsure ambitions, working random jobs in a different

country with waning interest in the things I used to love but nothing yet to replace them with, I think especially of these women. In a period of such unsureness, it's comforting to be part of a lineage of —albeit fictional— young women trying to figure things out.

None of these movies end with guaranteed success or a definite moment of having things all sorted, so it's unusual to find so much solace in them. Watching Frances Ha after a breakdown about what I'm even doing with my life, my boyfriend was surprised that all the unsureness and discomfort of Frances' life didn't make me feel even worse. The comfort these movies bring isn't through the hollow promise that things will work out, or platitudes about having endless time, but that they meet you where you are: in the sludge of 20s interregnum.

Previous periods of my life were defined by mandatory structure: school and then the socially-accepted stagnancy of university, where life stayed structurally the same for four years with no obvious material marker of progression. While some may describe my year of living overseas as a “lost year” of “squandering my potential”, I think I really needed some time to just exist for a while without a strongly defined purpose other than to experience something else and gather impressions Isabel Archer-style. I don't necessarily feel like I've got a better idea of where my life is leading – or even where I want it to – but I'm sure I'd be having the same crisis if I did the “responsible” things like doing an honours year or getting a corporate job straight out of uni. Everyone is practicing how they want to live their lives and the only way to figure it out is by practicing. While I do feel a sense of guilt, irresponsibility, aimlessness, loss of identity and unnerving lack of purpose, I'm sure I'll look back on this period with fondness. In the meantime, I'm enjoying the sensation of my life mirroring my favourite kind of movie. ✨

Slacker Woman Movie List:

Girlfriends (1978)	Nights and Weekends (2008)
Smithereens (1982)	Tiny Furniture (2010)
Variety (1983)	Frances Ha (2012)
Reality Bites (1994)	Mistress America (2015)
Party Girl (1995)	I Blame Society (2020)
Walking and Talking (1996)	Shiva Baby (2020)
Clockwatchers (1997)	The Worst Person in the World (2021)
The Last Days of Disco (1998)	Actual People (2021)
Funny Ha Ha (2002)	Theory of Achievement (1991)*
Morvern Callar (2002)	

**Special Mention*

Today of Tomorrow

Soralinn

Live in the present.

Look at the sky above you, and the ground below you. The flowers decorate your feet, they are going to celebrate every step you take—now. It is now.

Those words were what tried to mould me back together. But my body was full of breaks and holes that they would spill right out. I couldn't see the **present** today, without feeling the dried tear stain. The silent tears of yesterday. What did I cry about yesterday? I don't know— I can't remember.

I do remember the way I sat down at the corner of my bedroom, the tears flowing. I was thinking about things— way too many I lost count. Nothing that I could make out. I can't begin to recall which fleeting thought it was that my eyes started to well up. The moment I remember was a second too late— I failed to grasp.

I think about it hard— to find what tiny pain in my toes made me so weak that I pressed my tongue against my teeth and the roof of my mouth. I noticed the way my breathing ceased.

Now it's the next day. I am on a plane and I look out the window where the city lights beam with the proof of life. That same congested feeling rises up inside my head, but this time I know exactly the thought that caused my eyes to swell— **now** doesn't exist for me.

I am still grieving the loss of a family.

The loss of a best friend stays vividly in my head.

For the only person I had loved, let go, is the overwhelming yesterday.

I haven't yet overcome.

With each day passing by—the present becomes the past— I grieve for each day that created a bigger gap from the last meal at the family dinner table. The meal; warm, and all my siblings were side by side. I was running out of breath, for each day because of the reality I couldn't catch up with. The world has left me behind, and I hated waking up to this new sun.

Each present was the distance I felt from my past. My sister lives on a different island, my brother the same. My father lives on a mountain, and my mother within the hills. Each day, I stay confined to the past; scared if I moved on to new memories, I would forget the old ones. Because even in grief, there exist the people I love but can no longer see.

With so much grief that I carry like my very own baby, not letting it out of sight, I manage to dream about the future. A future of a present where I stay happy: A future of a present in which I live in the right place, eat all the right fruits, with all the right people beside me— side by side— never worried when we will see each other again.

Hope isn't lost for me.

With such confidence, I try not to cry on the aeroplane where a stranger sits beside me. Music is playing nonstop on shuffle, and I don't know how many songs it's past. I don't remember the last song played. With so much idle hope, I comfort myself that the future I love will certainly come. I switch my attention to the song playing, which's taken its turn to be present:

だって『今』のこの僕が昨日の僕の『未来』

Because the 'me' of right now, is the 'future' of me from yesterday.

RADWIMPS (2006) 夢番地

Now doesn't exist for me. I lose myself back into the thoughts. But it's not a fleeting thought, it's conscious. I feel something inside me switch at the last second of the lyrics speak to me with a gentle voice. I cannot see all those flowers that celebrate my footsteps like my parents told me on the phone the other day. **Now** doesn't exist for me because—I keep wasting the future of yesterday.

The present is the future of yesterday, the past of tomorrow. I was trapped, not knowing that the present now was made up of all the memories of myself that I had loved. *I see that now.*

I know the song I grew to love because someone I love introduced it to me. I still enjoy it.

I cook the food I grew to love because my mom made me that since I was young. It still feels like home.

I go on a walk after I finish my dinner— a habit of my father's.

I look around the ocean in front of me, and the bright moon staring at me.

I am so full of everyone inside me. I am so full of hope no longer idle.

The future that I promised myself yesterday, is today. ★



Whose room is this now?

22

Elizabeth Poulos

there is a crater in the plaster wall but i don't
remember anymore if it was a toy i told Him not to throw
that damaged my stuff or

one of Them falling and
banging Their naked, hairy backs against the wall.

it was His or Theirs

the bed here now looks freakishly big, but i need it
for my customers, the space that They and i
need to take, the room They need to take me in.
But it's freakishly big,

The twin nestled my boy with grace, tigers and
pumas that leapt and bound across the quilt
they danced and purred under His eyelids made
of gold. i rest my head on His pillow,
sometimes.

There are squares on the wall with no dust that i
haven't laid over yet. There are marker lines near the bottom
which i have covered up. All of them, with pictures

of breasts and cunts and smiles and cocks that
work for the Men who enter this room. Own this room.

now. "I like your place, candy," one of Them grunts,
cumming, i don't know if They mean my vagina or the room.
"you got a good sense of style," Another groans,

but the clothes He just ripped off me or my room? my room? Own this room?
i keep one of His picture books under the bed,
like His hidden gravestone. ✱

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About

Started by Thierry St. Quentin, Plinky Plonky

is a production house and quarterly literary magazine. Engrained within Sydney's literature and music scene, Plinky Plonky takes pride in publishing the work of all creatives and supporting all creatives.

Plinky Plonky is proud of it's small size and big ambitions.

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SEE YOU SOON...

